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WEEKLY REPORT



THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

29 September 1965

**INTELLIGENCE AND REPORTING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE INTERAGENCY
VIETNAM COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

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DIA and DOS review(s) completed.

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THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM
(23 September - 29 September 1965)

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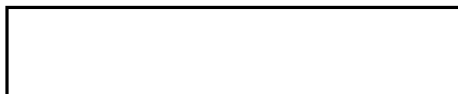
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(The Weekly Report on the Situation in South Vietnam is based on contributions from CIA, DIA and INR; it is edited and published by CIA without final coordination. A fully coordinated Monthly Report will be disseminated on the first Friday of every month.)



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THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE

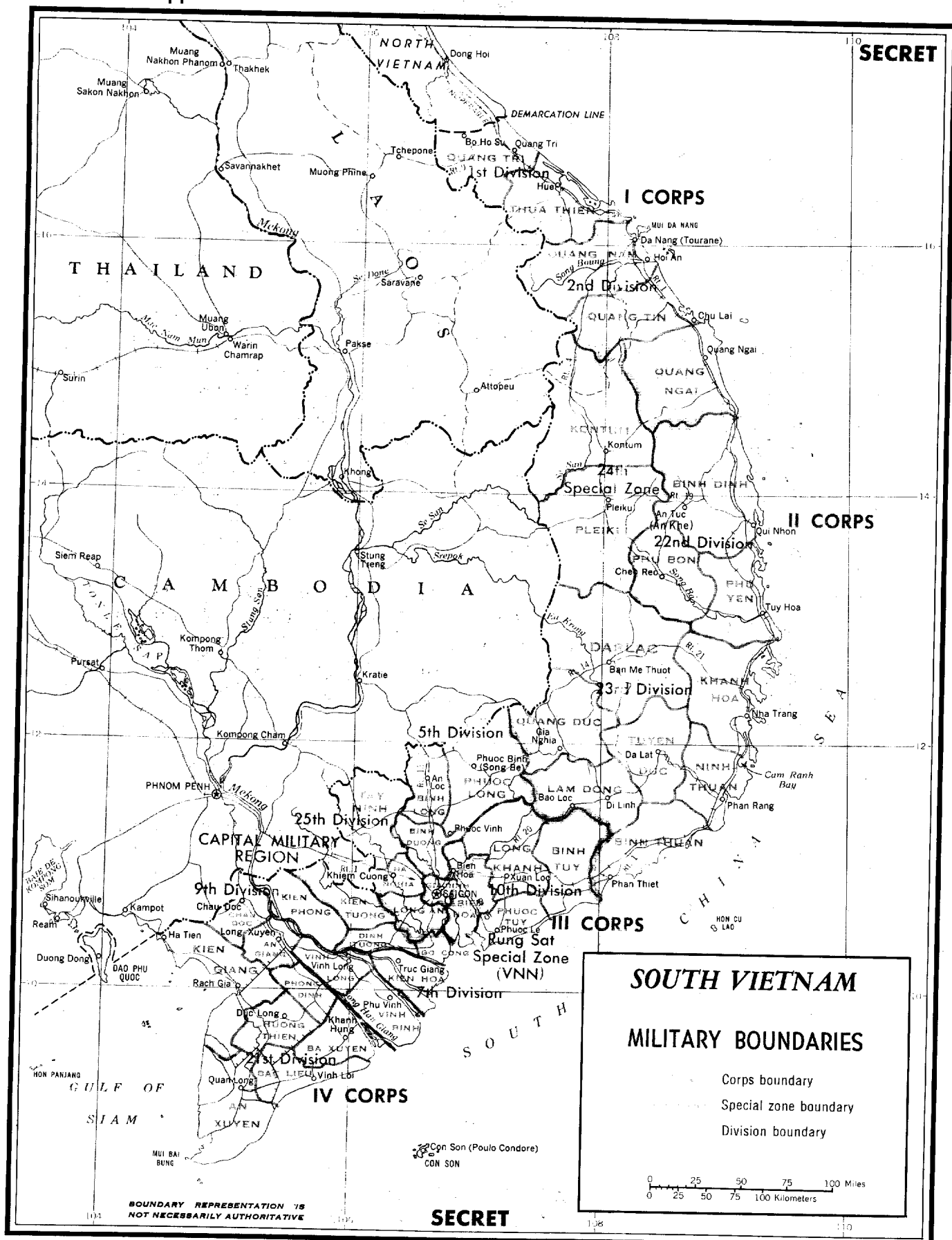
The military leadership in Saigon is reportedly planning a number of early changes in both the cabinet and key military positions in the interest of greater efficiency and, allegedly, in response to criticisms raised at the recent congress of military officers. A large but orderly Buddhist demonstration in northernmost Quang Tri Province protesting alleged discrimination, and the appearance in Hue of a student "struggle" newspaper with neutralist and anti-American overtones, suggest that the government may be facing renewed problems with militant Buddhist and student circles.

Following the Viet Cong Liberation Front radio announcement this week that two American military prisoners had been executed in retaliation for death sentences carried out against three Viet Cong agitators in Da Nang, Premier Ky publicly affirmed that his government would continue its policy of executing convicted Viet Cong agents.

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I. THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. POLITICAL SITUATION

1. The ruling military Directorate is apparently contemplating some early reshuffling of a number of cabinet and military posts in the interest of greater effectiveness and, reportedly, in response to criticisms raised at the recent congress of military officers.

2. Premier Ky this week indicated to the press that he would shortly make another major policy speech, and that he might announce some changes in his cabinet. Ky told a meeting of the Directorate on 27 September, [redacted], that he was seeking replacements for the present secretaries of youth and sports and of psychological warfare--with whom he has experienced frictions for some time--and that he will probably replace the incumbent secretary of public works with the present deputy secretary. In addition, Ky reportedly indicated that he would name Le Van Tien, a member of the government's civilian "brain trust," to fill the position of secretary of rural construction, vacant since the death of Nguyen Tat Ung. Tien has been one of the targets of criticism by Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang.

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3. The Directorate, [redacted] has approved several military command changes to become effective on 1 October. The most significant change would be the appointment of General Cao Van Vien, now commander of III Corps, as chief of the Joint General Staff, a position now held by General Nguyen Huu Co, who would retain his other title of minister of war. Vien would be replaced in III Corps by the present 7th Division commander, General Nguyen Bao Tri, with the current Go Cong Province chief taking over the 7th Division.

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4. In addition, General Huynh Van Cao would be reassigned from deputy chief of staff for political warfare to coordinator of the Hop Tac program, and General Pham Xuan Chieu, secretary-general of the Directorate, would take on responsibility for the political warfare department. Finally, the chief of engineers, General Pham Dang Lan, will be replaced because of reported involvement in corruption, while the 22nd Division commander, General Nguyen Thanh Sang, is to be given a month's grace to "straighten out" under similar charges.

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5. There have been new stirrings among the Buddhists, particularly the militants in northern South Vietnam, and to a lesser extent among those student circles that had engaged in active protests against the government during August. In northern most Quang Tri Province on 26 September, local Buddhist organizations supported by the province cyclodriver's union staged a peaceful demonstration, which eventually swelled to 10,000-15,000 persons, to protest a grenade-throwing incident against the main provincial pagoda on 21 September. Although Hue Buddhist leaders had indicated that the chief of Quang Tri Province was being blamed for the grenade incident, the slogans on the banners carried by the demonstrators were limited to demands for protection and an end to discrimination.

6. The Buddhists in Quang Tri, backed by the elected provincial council and egged on by their colleagues in the Hue area, have for some time been seeking to oust the civilian chief of Quang Tri Province, a Catholic and Dai Viet party member currently receiving strong support from I Corps commander General Thi. The absence of direct attacks on the Quang Tri Province chief in the 26 September demonstrations may indicate that while the Buddhists are seeking an issue on which to challenge the government, they are still reluctant to force a direct conflict with General Thi. A Buddhist leader told a US consular officer on 27 September, however, that the Buddhists were "at the end of our patience" over abuses by the Quang Tri Province chief, and implied that there might be further demonstrations, spreading to Hue itself.

7. Meanwhile, Thich Tam Chau, the chairman of the Unified Buddhist Association's (UBA) Institute in Saigon, has circulated a letter among religious faiths warning that the UBA would have to adopt a hostile attitude if other religious leaders give equal recognition to the General Buddhist Association, a rival minority organization that Chau termed a creature of the former Huong government. Chau reportedly gave a similar warning to the government through the Saigon area commander. Chau, who continues privately to profess his active support for the Ky government, may well be acting under pressure from Tri Quang and militants in central Vietnam. According to recent information, Chau refused a request

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by General Thi that he use his influence to quiet Buddhist and student agitation in the Hue area on the grounds that he could not publicly oppose the Hue "revolutionaries." Chau reportedly also believes that Ky, in recently threatening harsh action against intellectual troublemakers, might be provoking trouble for himself, and that Ky's government will not last.

8. General Thi, in the company of visiting Premier Ky, lectured a group of students in Hue last week on the need to avoid trouble on the "home front" while troops were dying in the field. The US Consulate's opinion that Thi's appeal had little effect seemed borne out with the appearance, a few days later, of the first issue of a weekly newspaper published by the Hue student "struggle" group. The contents of the paper contained strong overtones of neutralist sentiment and anti-Americanism, although there was no suggestion of an imminent resumption of active agitation. Meanwhile, there have been threats of a student demonstration in Saigon over Premier Ky's refusal to receive a student petition protesting government abuses at the provincial level.

9. The execution of three alleged Viet Cong in Da Nang on 22 September--for instigating an anti-government, anti-US demonstration in the city two days earlier--drew sharp propaganda denunciation from the Viet Cong, and was followed by a Liberation Front radio announcement on 26 September that two US military captives, Captain Humbert R. Versace and Sergeant Kenneth Rorabach, had been executed in retaliation. The Viet Cong, who had announced a similar retaliatory execution in June, indicated that such measures were justified and would be their policy in the event of future "murders" by the Saigon authorities. On 27 September, Premier Ky told the press that the government would continue both private and public executions of convicted Viet Cong agents and sympathizers, adding that occasional public executions were needed to serve as a deterrent.

Economic Situation

10. The US mission is favorably impressed with the performance of the economic personnel in the Ky administration. Under the leadership of Minister of Economy

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and Finance Truong Thai Ton, Ky's principal economic advisors--his "economic block," which includes the ministries of Economy, Public Works, Finance, and Agriculture--reportedly have worked quietly, diligently, and pragmatically on South Vietnam's acute economic problems. The newly appointed governor of the National Bank, Nguyen Huu Hanh, who was vice governor of the bank during 1958-60 and recently worked with the International Finance Corporation in the US, is expected to work closely with this group. Minister Ton is said to view inflationary pressures as the principal economic problem now facing the GVN.

11. The latest achievement of the GVN economic ministries is the newly signed decree increasing customs taxes on a wide range of goods. It is designed to raise customs revenues by an estimated 1.8 billion piasters annually, an increase of about 25 percent in total tax revenues.

12. Rice prices in Saigon eased somewhat last week, and the arrival of PL-480 and Thai rice improved the rice situation in the central and northern provinces. In the meantime, Foreign Minister Do and Ambassador Lodge signed an amendment of the PL-480 agreement on 23 September, providing for shipment of an additional 100,000 metric tons of rice to meet November and December needs.

13. The retail price index for local commodities fell slightly. However, the free market price for dollars remained stable, ranging from 146-148 piasters per US greenback dollar, and 120-122 piasters per dollar of scrip.

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B. MILITARY SITUATION

1. The tempo of military activity increased during the week of 19-25 September as Viet Cong - initiated actions in I and II Corps Tactical Zones (CTZ) met strong reactions.

2. Overall Viet Cong activity declined slightly, but its intensity increased. There were 11 attacks, including one each of battalion size in I and II CTZs. There was a two-company attack in the Capital Military Region.

3. Terrorism as usual accounted for most of the activity--62 percent this week over 58 percent last week. Of all incidents, 29 percent occurred in IV CTZ, 23 percent in II CTZ, and 22 percent each in I and III CTZs. Incidents in the Capital Military Region--four percent of the nationwide total--dropped to 21 from the previous week's 40.

4. In I CTZ, total Viet Cong - initiated incidents increased although harassment of friendly forces decreased. In a well-executed ambush, a Viet Cong battalion utilized village huts for the concealment of automatic weapons; as government troops entered the village, the hut walls were knocked down and heavy friendly casualties were sustained in the crossfire. Activity in II CTZ remained at the same relatively low level as last week. An attack at Phu Cu in Binh Dinh Province was estimated at battalion size, although ARVN reaction forces claim they encountered a force of regimental strength. For the second straight week, members of FULRO--the tribal autonomy movement--were active in kidnapping civilians and delivering propaganda; such incidents are expected to continue. The III CTZ again had little more than harassment, indicating, according to MACV, that the Viet Cong in this area are in a phase of training, replacement, and resupply. In the Capital Military Region, the VC mounted a two-company attack, probably to demonstrate their ability to do this in the Saigon area. Activity in IV CTZ was approximately the same as last week except that there were six attacks--three of company size and three of smaller scale. The pattern of incidents remained about the same as that experienced since mid-July, with principal attention given to harassment, sabotage, terrorism, and propaganda.

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5. The Viet Cong continue to emphasize the interdiction of overland communication routes. National Route 1 is closed in the provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Binh Thuan, and Long Khanh. Route 14 is closed in Kontum, Pleiku, Quang Duc, Phuoc Long, and Binh Duong provinces. Route 19 is closed west of Pleiku city. Route 7 is closed in Long An Province. Provincial Route 10 is closed in Hau Nghia Province.

The national railroad is operating between Saigon and Xuan Loc, Long Khanh Province; between Song Mao, Binh Thuan Province, and Ninh Hoa, Khanh Hoa Province; between Da Nang, Quang Nam Province, and Dong Ha, Quang Tri Province; and between Dalat, Tuyen Duc Province, and Thap Cham, Ninh Thuan Province.

6. Friendly operations were characterized by aggressive reaction, sound planning, and effective utilization of supporting air and artillery. Large-unit operations increased to 92 from last week's 65, while related contacts with the Viet Cong rose to 42 compared to 33 last week. The kill ration was 6.9 to 1 in favor of the GVN, an increase over last week's 4.3 to 1. Small-unit operations decreased slightly to 19,887 from last week's 20,807. However, Viet Cong contacts increased from 158 to 166; most contacts occurred during daylight hours. VNAF and USAF activity increased in all categories; the largest gains were in close air support. Sea, river, and coastal forces continued operations with no unusual results.

7. Action in I CTZ was concentrated along the coast and national highway. The most significant operation was Lam Son 196, a 3d ARVN Regiment reaction that developed into a search-and-destroy effort along National Route 1 northwest of Hue, in Thua Thien Province.

8. Highway security was the main theme in II CTZ operations. The relief of Phu Cu in Binh Dinh Province--a strong 22d ARVN Division reaction (Quyet Thang 165) to a possible VC regiment-size ambush attempt--was the most spectacular action. Viet Cong losses are expected to total well over 600 killed.

9. In III CTZ, the continuing combined search-and-destroy effort in the Ben Cat area was significant for

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discoveries rather than contacts. Supplies that were captured or destroyed included 406 tons of rice, 105 rifles, four tons of ammunition, one tank and two cargo trucks, one generator, three caches of medical supplies, 93 pounds of explosives, and 127 grenades. Installations that were destroyed included 36 houses, five warehouses, 16 camps, two supply depots, one work shop, and one arms factory capable of producing small-arms ammunition and 60-mm. mortar ammunition.

10. Operations in IV CTZ were conducted in Dinh Tuong, Chuong Thien, and Bac Lieu provinces, with no significant contacts reported.

11. US Navy ships provided shore bombardment on 118 targets. Seventh Fleet carriers launched 577 strike sorties throughout South Vietnam. US Air Force offensive sorties totaled 1,171, a 10 percent increase over last week. Six B-52 Stratofortress raids, employing a total of 87 aircraft, struck targets in Quang Tin and Quang Ngai provinces, I CTZ; Binh Duong Province in III CTZ (two strikes); and An Xuyen and Vinh Binh provinces in IV CTZ.

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C. RURAL CONSTRUCTION

1. Chieu Hoi returnees numbered 2,163 during the period 18-25 September, as compared to 1,777 the previous week. During the current reporting period there were 220 military returnees compared with last week's 51; 66 returnees were listed as political cadres, as contrasted with six in this category last week; 1,870 were civilian returnees, versus 1,711 last week; seven returnees were categorized as either draft dodgers or deserters. Returnees surrendered 67 individual weapons and 47 grenades.

2. During the month of August there was a decrease in the number of civilian provincial, district, and hamlet officials killed or kidnapped by the Viet Cong as compared with July. During August, 24 civilian officials were killed and 29 kidnapped; in July, the totals were 37 and 36, respectively. Since the beginning of the year, 368 civilian officials have been killed and 653 kidnapped by the Communists.

3. In response to Premier Ky's demand for district teams composed of trained administrators to supervise and direct cadres at the district level, a special committee representing the Premier's office, the ministries of Interior and Rural Construction, and the National Institute of Administration (NIA) examined the assignments of previous NIA graduates and earmarked several hundred for release from their present assignments. The older and more experienced officials will be mixed with recent NIA graduates in teams, after undergoing special training at the NIA.

4. Psychological operations, together with supporting civil action programs, continue to be widespread and varied. Of special interest is the continued exploitation of military "ralliers" from the Viet Cong in the psychological warfare effort. In Quang Tri Province, for example, the defection of a corporal from a Viet Cong main force battalion was the basis for leaflet drops and airborne loudspeaker broadcasts. In Go Cong Province, information indi-

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cating that Viet Cong units were suffering from malaria led to loudspeaker broadcasts promising medical assistance to those who surrendered to the government. In Kien Hoa Province, leaflet messages from a Viet Cong defector were dropped over Viet Cong-held territory.

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II. THIRD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS

A. SOUTH KOREA

1. The South Korean Marine brigade was formally activated 20 September at Pohang, Korea. It will be known as the Blue Dragon unit of the ROK Tiger Division. The first increment, an advance party of 265 officers and enlisted men, arrived at Nha Trang on 24 September.

2. On 27 September, Prime Minister Chong Il-kwon, accompanied by Minister of Commerce and Industry Pak Chong-hun and Minister without Portfolio Yun Chi-yong, arrived in Saigon. The Prime Minister and his party are expected to exchange views with the GVN on matters of mutual interest, as well as visit the Korean military contingent in Vietnam.

B. GRC

On 22 September, the semiofficial Vietnam Press Agency carried the French-language version of an interview of General Thieu by the Taipei Central News Agency correspondent in Saigon. Thieu reportedly stated that in case of aggression against South Vietnam by the Chinese Communists, greater cooperation between the GVN and the GRC would be necessary and could go beyond the frontiers of South Vietnam. Thieu also said that in the context of a war of liberation that will be undertaken in the future by the GRC against the mainland, the geographic position of South Vietnam offers the opportunity for closer GVN-GRC cooperation.

C. ICC

1. In a letter delivered to the GVN liaison mission to the ICC on 27 September, the US accepted responsibility for the 16 and 17 September bombings in the Demilitarized Zone along the 17th parallel. The US announced that the incidents were caused by navigational errors and did not reflect any policy of the US to attack or violate the zone. Assurances were given that efforts are being made to ensure that similar incidents do not occur in the future.

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2. The US Embassy in Saigon suggests that because of our own relatively prompt performance on these incidents, it might now be propitious to pressure the Indians for a quick decision of the Vung Ro matter. (Vung Ro was the site of the February sinking of a 120-ton steel-hulled North Vietnamese ship engaged in infiltrating weapons and other supplies to the Viet Cong in South Vietnam.)

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D. ICRC CONFERENCE

An official GVN delegation headed by Phan Van Thinh, secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has left Saigon for the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross at Vienna. After the conference, Thinh will visit several European countries in order to request free world assistance. His tentative schedule includes visits to Rome, Bonn, the Hague, and Brussels.

E. MALAYSIA

The US Embassy in Saigon has been informed that Premier Ky is planning to visit Kuala Lumpur for four days beginning 4 October, but will not visit Singapore.

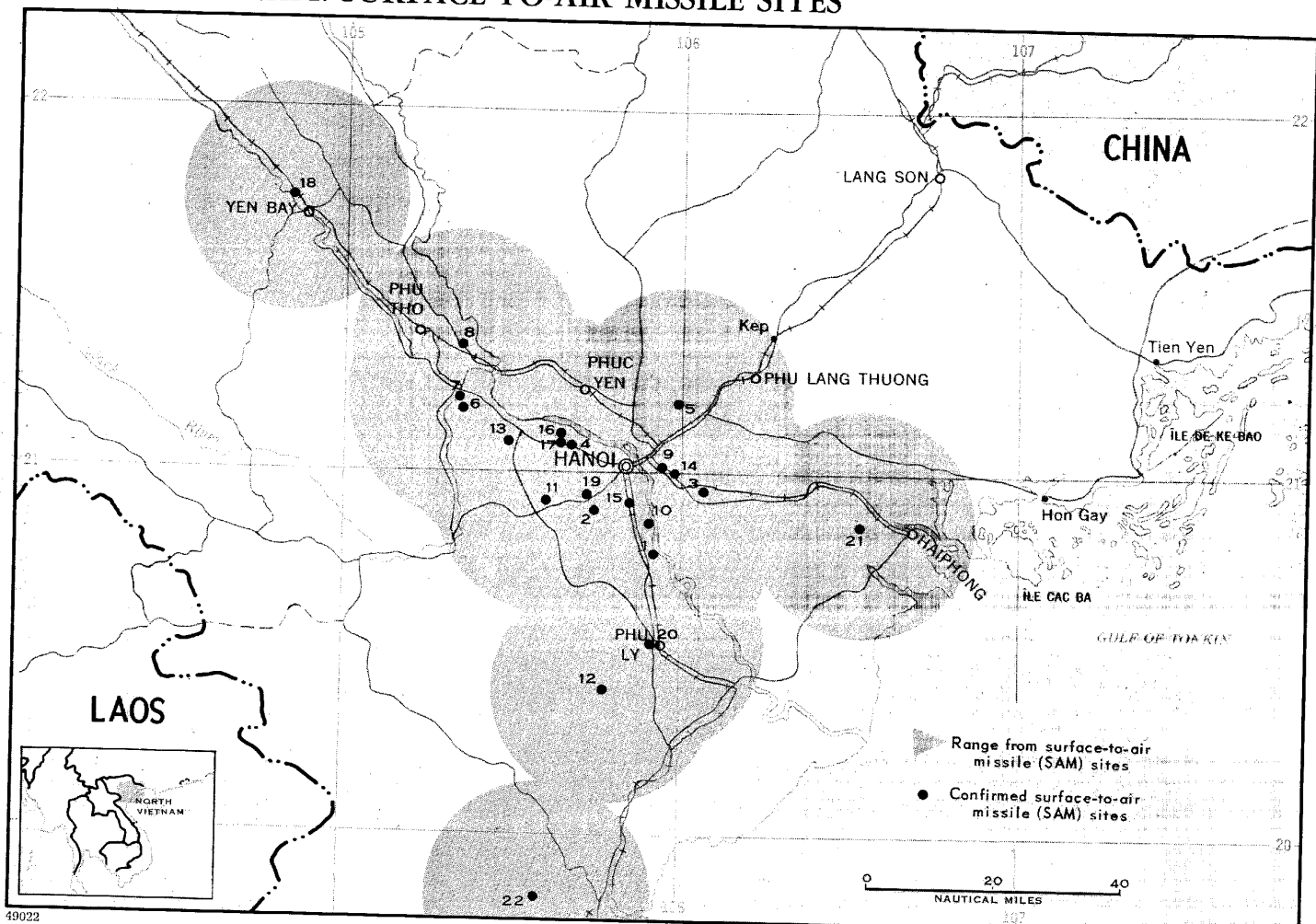
F. CAMBODIA

At a press conference in Rangoon before his departure for Peking, Prince Sihanouk reportedly branded the US forces in South Vietnam as "occupation troops" and called for their immediate withdrawal.

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NORTH VIETNAM: SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SITES



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III. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BLOC

A. MILITARY

The presence of three new surface-to-air missile sites in the DRV--numbers 20 through 22--was confirmed this week. Site number 20 is situated about 30 miles south of Hanoi and number 22 is 11 miles northwest of Than Hoa. The twenty-first site is in the Haiphong region and is the first such defensive missile installation to be discovered in the region around the DRV's chief port.

B. POLITICAL

1. The North Vietnamese Government issued an official memorandum on 23 September setting forth its present position on negotiating an end to the Vietnam war. The document, the first such official statement since the 8 April proposals of Premier Pham Van Dong, did not contain any new proposals on the conflict. However, its phraseology at several points, notably those areas where the regime may feel that there is room for further exploration with the US, did convey an impression of flexibility. For example, the document called for the inclusion of the Liberation Front in any talks on the war, but it failed to insist that any settlement of the conflict must be in "accordance" with the Front's program, as have previous DRV statements. Furthermore, the memorandum did not rule out the participation of representatives of the Saigon government in any settlement, as other DRV statements in the past have implied. Also, the document did not label the withdrawal of US forces an immediate necessity, apparently in keeping with private assurances from Hanoi that the timing of a US troop pullout can be left to negotiations, and is not a precondition to starting talks.

2. The document insisted that the US must solemnly accept the DRV's four points but tied this acceptance to a final settlement of the war and not explicitly to starting negotiations, suggesting that formal US "acceptance" is not something that Hanoi will stand fast on, if and when it is ready to talk.

3. Four days after the release of the memorandum, Hanoi radio rebroadcast in English significant portions of an earlier Vietnamese-language article that was also designed to define the DRV position on arranging a negotiated settlement of the war. The rebroadcast underscored

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the importance that Hanoi attaches both to the inclusion of the Liberation Front in any settlement and to the issue of US withdrawal. On the latter point, it repeated earlier DRV statements that the US must "accept withdrawal," but also implied that such a withdrawal need not come before negotiations and that it could be carried out in a fashion similar to the staged withdrawal of the French from Algeria and Indochina and of the US from Laos. In attempting to portray DRV flexibility on the subject of negotiation, the article stated that if the US would accept the stand of both the DRV and the Front, then Hanoi was willing to negotiate a settlement of the war anywhere at any time. The broadcast claimed that these conditions, as embodied in the four points of the DRV and the five points of the Front, amounted to a "much lower price" than some provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements.

4. Hanoi radio on 27 September revealed publicly for the first time that North Vietnam regards US pilots captured in North Vietnam as "criminals caught in the act," and that the pilots will be tried for violation of local North Vietnamese law. The broadcast quoted the text of a letter, sent by the DRV Foreign Ministry to the International Red Cross on 31 August, to the effect that since 1957 Hanoi has taken exception to the Geneva Convention articles on the treatment of prisoners of war. Therefore, US pilots shot down over North Vietnam will not be considered by Hanoi as covered by the convention. The North Vietnamese announcement followed by one day the disclosure by the Liberation Front that it had executed two American prisoners in retaliation for the execution of Viet Cong demonstrators by South Vietnamese authorities.

USSR

5. In a major Soviet policy statement to the 20th UN General Assembly in New York on 24 September, Foreign Minister Gromyko denounced US actions in Vietnam. He repeated Moscow's standard position on the Vietnam problem by calling for an end to US air raids and the withdrawal of all American forces from South Vietnam. At the same time, the Soviet foreign minister termed the repeated US calls for negotiations as merely a smokescreen to cover up US aggression, and pledged once again that the USSR would provide "necessary fraternal assistance to the DRV."

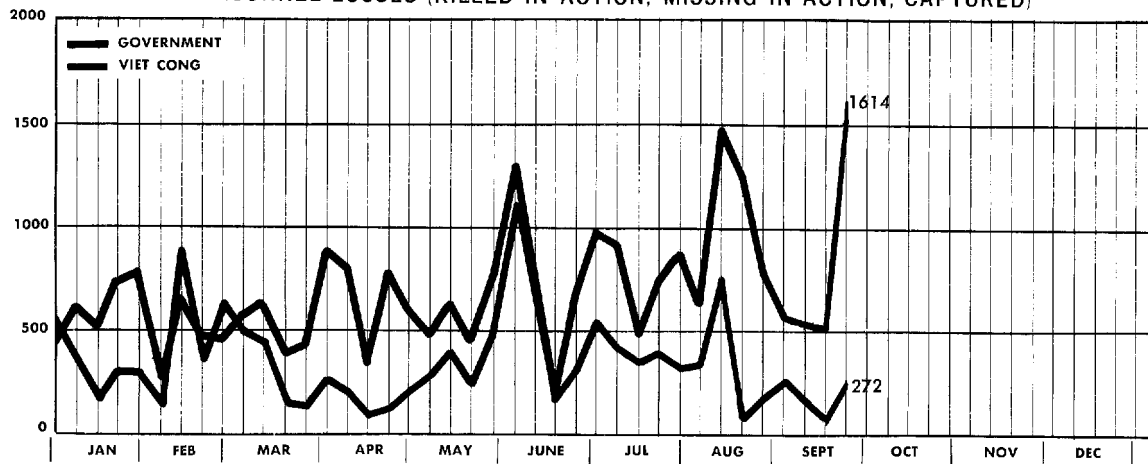
SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS, 1965

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WEEKLY REPORT

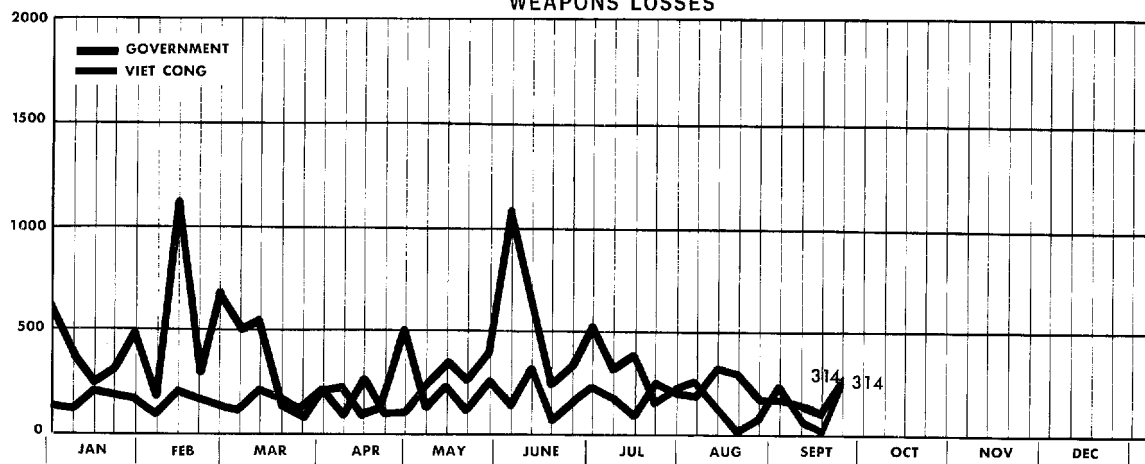
18 - 25 SEPTEMBER

PERSONNEL LOSSES (KILLED IN ACTION, MISSING IN ACTION, CAPTURED)

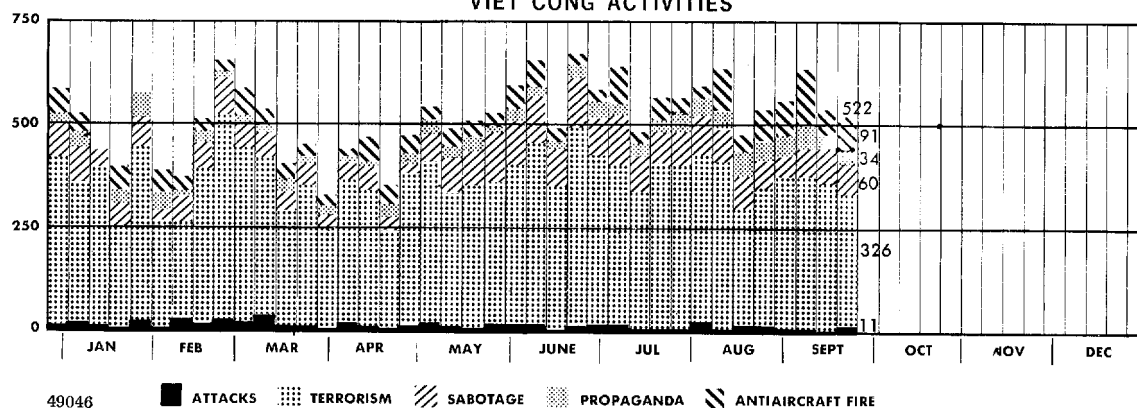


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WEAPONS LOSSES



VIET CONG ACTIVITIES



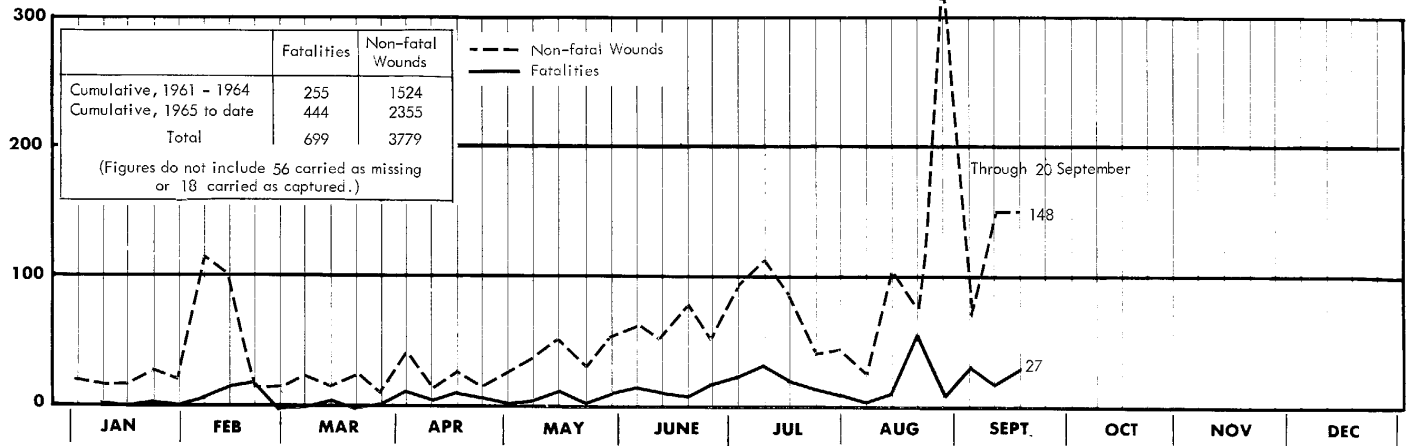
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ATTACKS TERRORISM SABOTAGE PROPAGANDA ANTIAIRCRAFT FIRE

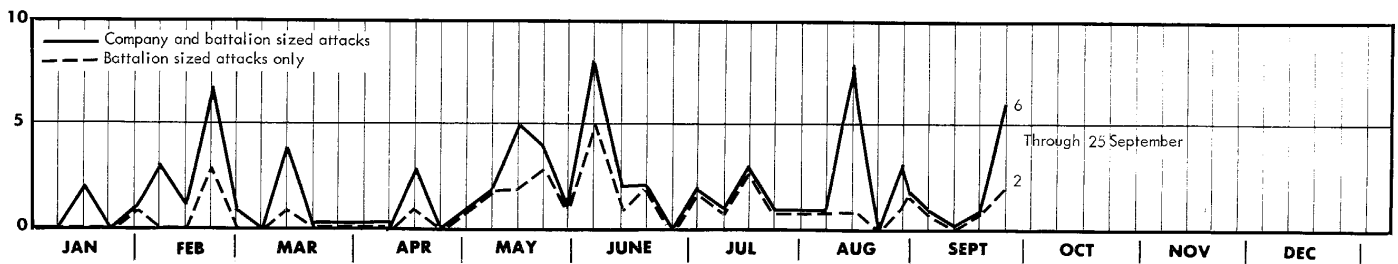
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US COMBAT CASUALTIES IN VIETNAM INCLUDING NORTH VIETNAM

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VIET CONG ATTACKS



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